

London-Surrey 1971 and 1972

Memories live not only in the head but also in the gut and the backbone and the limbs. The senses are a major part of what makes memories so important. The feeling in my teeth when I accidentally knocked the front ones against a railing in front of the sea lion enclosure at Chessington Zoo. The taste of blood and the sound of adult voices saying I'd lost a tooth. I was, what age? A baby I suppose, a toddler perhaps.

The CRACK of the glass on a picture frame as I fell, face first into the sharp shards, cutting my face, scarring my cheek for the rest of my life. I was four or five. The picture was a photo-portrait of my sister Keeley.

The glow of the light from the hallway, illuminating the doorway of the bedroom where I tried to sleep, in my little bed, while television noise from the living room played on. The patterns on the inside of my eyelids as I tried to sleep, while the hall light shone in directly upon me and my two sisters Alex and Keeley shared the other little bed in the tiny room. The voices of Alfred Hitchcock and Boris Karloff on the late night mystery, horror and science fiction TV shows before the epilogue and the close down from television centre.

I remember the smell of coal fire smoke from the prefab chimneys in winter and the combined smells of new cut lawns, creosote and dog's muck that represented suburban Surrey in spring and summer. I remember the pain and the confusion of all the times I needed stitches, sometimes in my leg, several times in my head, because I was both reckless and clumsy and would crash my bicycle, my roller skates into walls and fences, or fall out of trees. I was a frequent visitor to the Casualty Department.

There were actually three sisters, Alex, Keeley and Saffron. Saffron was the eldest and left home to study nursing.

Although I had travelled north to Manchester by train I made my return journey by the poor man's taxi, hitchhiking. It was my first experience of hitching and it took a lot longer than I expected. I had been staying at Mike's flat in Salford (known to us in the south as the backdrop to my mum's favourite TV soap opera, "Coronation Street").

Hitchhiking. Waiting. There is a dreadful stretching of the time vector of reality. The hitcher stands with his or her thumb projected and waits. Aeons of time pass until someone takes pity on you.

Eventually I got the lift I wanted. All the way to London. By the wee small hours of the next day I was in Waterloo Station looking at the train schedule boards.

The next train to St. Helier station, Morden, Surrey wasn't until soon after dawn so I would have a few hours to wait. I sat down on a bench and waited.

I read a book. I stared at the clock. I read a book. I walked up and down a bit. I sat. I stared at the clock. I read a book.

A man came up and sat on the bench beside me. Did I want a cigarette? "No thanks, I don't smoke". Did I mind if he smoked? "No, that's fine."

The guy began to make idle conversation. Eventually he got around to inviting me to sleep at his place. I told him "No thanks, I appreciate the offer but I need to be here to catch the train when they start running". He seemed to misunderstand and acted slightly hurt by my refusal. It was perfectly obvious that he was a homosexual hoping to pick up a teenage boy and, while I had no prejudice against homosexuality I also had no interest in that lifestyle. I was a virgin boy of 18. I liked girls but I didn't know any apart from my sisters.

I explained again that I was perfectly happy reading my book and waiting for the trains to run. He resumed the idle chatter which was beginning to really annoy me as I really wanted to get on with my book.

Nevertheless, to be polite I replied here and there, a little absently perhaps, to his chatter. A police car entered the station. Waterloo is a big station with plenty of space for vehicles to drive around. The architecture was designed in the 19th Century by J. W. Jacomb-Hood as a temple dedicated initially to Nike, the Greek goddess of victory and a few years later a Victory Arch was added, built of bronze and Portland stone by J. R. Scott and with the figure of Britannia above holding the torch of liberty. At night the police do routine sweeps for any vagrants that might be caught exercising that liberty. I hadn't been aware of this before but I learned it then.

The police car stopped and two uniform officers approached. They asked basic questions like name, address, age, and 'what are you doing here?' It seemed pretty simple, straightforward and routine until they finished by asking me whether I had ever been "cautioned". I'd never heard this piece of police jargon before so I didn't know what "cautioned" meant. I asked and got only a sarcastic laugh in return. I asked again, and again, and again. Each time the only explanation the police would give me was a grin, a wink to each other and a sarcastic laugh.

Meanwhile the other chap sitting on the bench was getting very nervous and agitated, whispering to me to "Just leave it". But I wouldn't "leave it" because I felt I had a right to know what this so called "caution" was all about. Eventually one of them replied to my question with a question of his own, "Do you object?" he asked me.

"Object to what?" I asked. "What do you mean?" I was still only 18 years old and completely baffled.

The policeman repeated, "Do you object?"

"Object to what? What does cautioned mean? And what am I supposed to be objecting to? What do you mean?"

Once again the police wouldn't give any reply except for a sarcastic laugh and then they got back into their car and drove off. They were, perhaps, not familiar with the concept of the police serving the public or perhaps they simply did not agree with that interpretation of their job. They had no apparent desire to explain their esoteric terminology to teenage curiosity. The guy sitting on the bench made a further offer of a bed for the night.

I thanked him but declined and he wandered off home.

I went back to reading my book until the trains started running again and then bought a ticket to St. Helier station in Surrey.

A couple of hours after dawn I was back at my mum's house in Canterbury Road, Morden. I was a bit apprehensive of what sort of greeting I would receive after being away for a few weeks but, in the event, it was a lot less dramatic than I'd feared. They were just glad to see me again. I had forgotten that my mother had probably been through it all before with my older siblings.

After explaining my travels and experiences to my mother and my sister Alex and apologising for the strange abruptness of my departure I went upstairs to my room.

My room was still as I had left it. There were still more than 2000 comic books in the cupboard. There was still a collection of old broken radios from junk shops. There were still pictures on the wall clipped from Jim Steranko Marvel Comics and stuck onto groovy paisley psychedelic background paper. My record collection was still there with the soundtrack to "2001: A Space Odyssey", The Beatles white double album, "Hot Rats" by Frank Zappa, my old Bing Crosby records and my Dave Brubeck singles, my Tchaikovsky records (free with "The Great Musicians" magazine), my boxed set of five Glenn Miller albums from the "Readers' Digest" magazine, my "Fly Doubleback" re-issues of Tyrannosaurus Rex albums, my wax 78 of "The Harry Lime Theme" and "The Café Mozart Waltz" by Anton Karas on the zither and all my other weird albums and singles which represented an attempt to remain un-brainwashed in a world which I believed was brainwashing everybody with phony "fashions" and "trends".

There were my books, my drawings, my spiritualist newspapers, my copies of "International Times" and "Gandalf's Garden" and "Peace News" and "Prediction Magazine" and "Man, Myth and Magic".

I lit some joss sticks and put on some music. I was home.

I was 18. I had no idea what direction my life would take but I knew I could draw (when the creative energy decided to work correctly) and I thought I might be able to write. I had a less than adequate education, no friends (unless I counted the people who ran my favourite sci-fi and comic book shop in Covent Garden), a strong belief in religion and a very vague idea of which religion it was.

I decided to get a job, save up some money and then set out on another great journey to explore England.

Days slipped by. Weeks slipped by. I didn't find work. I wrote lousy poetry and drew naïve comic strips. I lived in my mum's house and had no money. Time slid by as I disappeared further into my own head and thoughts.

I began visiting the "Labour Exchange", a government sponsored office which advertised job vacancies. Most people who went there were claiming unemployment benefit. Not me though. I had principles and objected to claiming "the dole" on the grounds that that would imply acceptance of the so-called 'government' as a legitimate ruler of the land. I had never

heard of anarchism and I believed my anti-government philosophy to be entirely religious and nothing to do with politics.

I really had very little idea of politics or any social system but I felt, on principle, that I shouldn't claim unemployment benefit because no one had ever given me the choice about whether to support the idea of a welfare state. The idea of needing sickness benefit or an old age pension was too remote to have any meaning to me at 18. I was wrong, of course. But I was immature even for an 18 year old. So it would be a few years before I would develop the maturity to understand the need for taxes, National Insurance, pensions and the NHS. At 18 all I could see was that the government were riding roughshod over the freedom of the people and no-one had ever had the courtesy to explain any of it to me or to ask me whether I wanted to take part.

I thought I was against the welfare state because there was no freedom of choice, no 'opt in' or 'opt out' regarding the system. I was angry at the idea of having to claim back my own money which the government had taken from my wages against my will. So I didn't claim it. But I knew I couldn't go on living on my mother's generosity for much longer so therefore I needed to get some kind of job.

Like many teenagers I was going through a phase in which I needed to create some sort of ego formation which would form a central idea of who I was or who I could possibly be in the grown-up world. Like many teenagers my early attempts at building that central ego version of the self involved roleplay with various personae.

I began to build a new persona for myself, combined from books I'd read. A character made up from comics and novels. My name was Smith, so I became "Wayland Smith". Why? Simply because Wayland Smith was the only person called Smith who appeared in ancient myths regarding the gods. I was Wayland Smith and I was some kind of wizard. The wizard Wayland Smith. Weaver of spells, of poetry and potions.

Well, I tried to write poetry but the spells and potions were completely imaginary. I was 18. Teenagers spend so much time trying to be grown up that it's easy to forget that the mind is still in a transitional state from child to adult. The teenage mind still likes to play games. To pretend stuff. To conjure up pretend personae through which some sense might be made of the world.

While my mother and sisters were downstairs watching the idiot goggle box I was up in my room, reading science fiction, or 'Prediction' (a horoscope magazine) or something similar. Sometimes I'd be reading about yoga and meditation in books from the 'Atlantis' bookshop in Bloomsbury.

I had a couple of books by Aleister Crowley, "Moonchild" and "Magick in Theory and Practice". I hadn't really read them but I had skimmed and dipped into them and had a vague idea of the subject matter. I was particularly interested in Crowley's attitude toward fiction. He suggested that fiction and fantasy were sources of magical power. It seemed as though it might be possible to become something by acting or playing like it. This suited exactly my eighteen year old role playing mind.

I began to dress in black and other dark shades like navy blue and charcoal grey. I already had a liking for the beatnik look and the dark mysterious wizard role seemed to dovetail in with the beatnik idea nicely.

I would sometimes walk around the neighbourhood wearing my dark clothes and carrying "Magick in Theory and Practice" under my arm. I would go to the downs and climb trees and then sit in the tree, feeling magical. I climbed hills, followed the course of rivers and streams, whittled at sticks with a penknife. One stick I fashioned into a crude writing implement which I then dipped in India Ink to make scrawling marks on rolled up paper. I would sit in cafés drinking a cup of tea and trying to look "strange" if the other customers happened to glance my way.

I listened to a lot of Tyrannosaurus Rex, Quintessence and the Soundtrack album from "2001: A Space Odyssey". All things with a sufficiently 'weird' and 'magical' sound.

I wrote. I drew. I created a comic strip series called "Li'l Hippy". He was an obnoxious little kid who ran around in every episode waving flowers and getting over-excited about comic books and saying the word 'MAN' at the end of every single word balloon. I was at the anthropological borderline between history and nature, between mythological sign systems and the undeniable solid matter of the real world.

I wrote the beginning of a science fiction novel set in a future, post-apocalyptic, Wimbledon where dispossessed people tried to eke out a living on a radioactive version of Wimbledon Broadway and were helped by a strange creature called "Teen Angel" who was really the spirit of a dead teddy boy from the 1950s who had returned to Earth to inhabit the body of a robot called L.V.S.17 (or "Elvis 17" - using the Isaac Asimov method of converting the letters in a robot's serial number into a name).

Embarrassing juvenilia influenced by my older sister Keeley's romances with teddy boys when I was only very little. I vividly remembered being threatened by one of them when I was only about 10.

My younger sister Alex had moved on from going out with skinheads to going out with hell's angels (they had motor bikes and skinheads didn't, so no contest). Alex tried to get me interested in Led Zeppelin but, in those days, I thought Led Zep wasn't weird enough for my tastes. Tchaikovsky was much weirder because nobody but me ever listened to him (round our way, that is). I was going all out for strangeness and individuality while Alex was trying to fit in with rock culture.

I had come to be more and more of the opinion that the government and the media were manufacturing fashionable movements like 'mods', 'rockers', 'hippies', 'beatniks', 'skinheads', 'hell's angels' etc. as a way of tricking young people into wearing recognisable uniforms and following predictable behaviour patterns. I also believed that drugs were secretly encouraged by the authorities as a way of doping everybody up and criminalising them at the same time. Doping everybody up would ensure that revolutions would always be abortive because the doped mind cannot reason sufficiently to get organised.

"As soon as this pub closes," says the song, "The revolution starts."

"Keep you doped with religion, sex and TV" sang John Lennon.

"The revolution will not be televised" chanted Gil Scott Heron.

Criminalising everybody ensures that the police don't need to be polite or serve the public, or at least, not that sector of the public which the covert forces have succeeded in selling dope to.

I had read a lot of underground newspapers by this time and was fully clued up on the CIA dope conspiracy, which followed on from the British use of opium to subvert the Chinese Empire way back when European empires and others competed with each other for power. I'd also read Orwell's "1984", Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451" and Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron". So I was becoming pretty wary of television screens.

I definitely didn't like the idea of drugs or alcohol and wasn't going to allow the establishment to trick me into that trap.

In my imagination I invented a fake nameless fashion. It would have all sorts of ridiculous details and make no sense. It would be loosely based on the Mad Magazine article "How to be a Mad non-conformist". It would be impossible for The State to manipulate it or absorb it since it would have no edges or corners or handles.

One day in early 1972 I left the house dressed in black shoes, black trousers, navy blue coat, black shirt and black tie with a black polo neck jumper on under the shirt. I had Aleister Crowley's "Magick in Theory and Practice" under my arm. I turned left out of the garden gate, walked up Canterbury Road and turned right into Green Lanes. I crossed the road to the central isle of Green lanes which was an old country footpath preserved from developers.

Traffic went by on either side of the central isle but, like many people around the area, I liked to walk along that old footpath, between an avenue of trees. I liked the fact that this old footpath and its trees had been preserved into the modern world and that we could still walk along there as though in a special timewarp which the planet polluting motorists couldn't destroy.

As I walked along, toward the railway station, two men got out of a car and crossed over toward the central isle. They seemed to be walking determinedly toward me. They quickly caught up with me. One of them stood in front of me and told me he was a police officer and he wanted to ask me some questions. As I walked past I replied with "No, sorry, I'm in a hurry to get to the railway station, can't stop." The two men positioned themselves in front of me again and said they needed to ask me some questions. I replied, "No, sorry, I haven't got time. I need to catch a train and there's only a few minutes to get to the station."

At this I was arrested manhandled toward a waiting unmarked car.

Down at the police station I was locked in a cell and asked about my name, where did I live, what did I do for a living, etc. All standard questions which I refused to answer and to which I stated that they had no jurisdiction over me since I had never voted for them. I insisted that I had never agreed to their fascist form of government and that I did not support their evil twisted ideas in any way, shape or form.

They set about tracing my home address from the contents of my pockets.

While I was held in the cells one particular detective, a man called Doyle, assailed me with accusation after accusation. He was of the opinion that I was a 'queer', a 'nancy boy', a 'weirdo', a 'pervert', a 'druggee'. He seemed to believe that I was a homosexual. He became more and more excited while throwing all of these accusations at me. His blood was up. Doyle called another officer, a uniform policeman, into the cell and got him to hold my right arm while Doyle held the left. They lifted me up and rushed me forward to the cell's little toilet cubicle, then they made as if to push me into the cubicle. I gripped the sides of the doorway with both hands and propped both feet against it as well. I pushed back for dear life, preventing them from getting me into the toilet cubicle. "Come on, come on!" screamed Doyle, "What's the problem matey? 'Cause you LIKE toilets, don't you?? All you poofers? You LIKE toilets!"

I remembered an article I had read in an underground newspaper. It was a description by Allen Ginsberg of how he had survived an anti Vietnam War protest where the police and national guard were busting hippy heads with nightsticks. He had chanted "OM MANI PADME HUM" over and over and had been preserved, like Moses crossing the Red Sea, by the power of faith. I also remembered talking about this article to the devotees at the Radha Krishna Temple in Bloomsbury.

One of the devotees told me he believed Ginsberg's story but also believed that chanting the Hare Krishna mantra would be even more powerful.

"Come on! Don't you want to go in the toilet with us MEN?" screamed Doyle.

"Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare," I chanted, getting louder, "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare."

The uniform police officer stopped pushing and let go of my arm. "What's up?" quizzed Doyle toward the other man.

The uniform officer stepped back and away, shaking his head. "What's the matter?" asked Doyle, also letting go of my arm. The uniform officer shrugged. "I don't think this is what we should be doing," he replied. He opened the cell door and walked out, followed by an angry Doyle.

I stood alone in the cell. Doyle's voice could be heard arguing all the way down the corridor as they disappeared through some other doors.

I sat in the cell and waited. I was there for a couple of hours. As I sat I reflected that it seemed that God/Krishna/Buddha/Tao/The ultimate truth and goodness of the universe by whichever name you choose to call it had come to my aid and intervened, causing the uniformed police officer to experience an epiphany, a satori, a road to Damascus conversion. "Wow." I thought, "Wow."

Much of my life at eighteen and around those years had been about print and paper. I had worked for a newspaper office and I had collected science fiction books and comics as though they were gold dust. I lived and breathed print.

Rupert Murdoch had built up a reputation for publishing risque photographs of young women in his Sunday paper the "News of the World" and in the daily paper "The Sun". Back in Australia he published the "Sydney Sunday Mirror" which tended to show pictures of topless beach barbecues where the women's breasts were covered by huge black rectangles which somehow imbued the picture with a sleaziness mere nudity could never achieve. It was, perhaps, a little odd that a virgin boy who had strong religious morals would work for such a company as News Ltd. However, I'd known nothing of the sleaze factor when I first took the job and had only begun to be a little bothered by it as time went on. It reminded me of the sleazy attitudes of teachers when I'd been at school a couple of years before.

The journalists thought it was a real "hoot" to send me on dodgy errands such as collecting a copy of the "page three" pictures from the News of the World offices in Bouverie Street or some dirty mag from the corner newsstand. They often sent me to collect press releases from photo and movie offices in Soho locations like Wardour Street. On one occasion I was sent to the office of two small porno publications called "Spick" magazine and "Span" magazine, which the journalists in my office had told me belonged to the Murdoch empire and so they "needed copies for their files".

These two magazines were the sort of thing which would titillate old men in those days, pictures of strippers wearing garters and corsets or women with breasts bigger than their own heads.

I dutifully fetched any item I was sent for and usually thought little of it. I would travel to whichever address on foot or by tube with my nose in a science fiction book or a Marvel comic the whole journey. On two occasions I had been sent to 10 Downing Street to collect a copy of the Honours List. Years later advance views of the lists would be sent out probably by email to the journalists but in the early 70s the lists needed to be collected personally from Downing Street. The second time I went there I was wearing a lapel badge which declared "I am an enemy of the state". The policeman on the door made a mild, good natured comment about that but still allowed me in the door. Downing Street had only the flimsiest pretence of security in the days before Margaret Thatcher.

There was an air of sleaziness over much of London in those days. Even some of the places where I went to buy Marvel comics were sleazy. Places such as the "Popular Book Centre" which was a chain of stores with branches all over London. Inside each branch were rows and rows of paperbacks and comics, through which I would search for titles I hadn't yet read. At the back of these shops, however, were the porno areas where old men in dirty raincoats made discreet inquiries about some special interest they might have, perhaps involving bondage. My awareness of these matters was mostly gleaned from watching "Monty Python's Flying Circus" and similar shows. The dirty old man was a standard character in the popular mythology and comedians returned to the theme often.

Although Monty Python had made references to "Gay Boys in Bondage" I, nevertheless, remember that, in those days, I naively imagined that bondage was of interest only to a tiny

minority of the population. I didn't realise how many people liked "whips and chains" or that sort of thing until a few years later, when it became fashionable during the punk years. In 1972, sitting in a police cell belonging to the Surrey Constabulary in Carshalton Road, Sutton. I was threatened, badgered, cajoled, insulted, accused and sneered at by the plainclothes detective Mr. Doyle. He called me a queer, a nancy boy, a pervert and all sorts of other names. He accused me of taking part in witch's sabbats, weird rituals and perversions. He asked me, "Where do you go, then? With other men?" and "Do you take it up your backside?" and similar questions, around the theme of black magic rituals and homosexuality. He mentioned the word "cottageing" although I didn't know what he meant by it. He also seemed fascinated by my tie. It was a plain black tie and had been confiscated along with the "Magick" book when I was brought in to the police station. Doyle seemed convinced that it was a police tie and wanted to know whether I had been given it as a present by "some young copper". He said they did have wooters in the police force and they needed to ferret them out. He was of the persuasion, which existed in the police in those days, which believed that the law would soon "go back to normal" and homosexuality would be illegal once again. In actual fact the tie had been my father's and had passed to me when my father died.

The whole procedure was perplexing and bizarre. Of course, I knew I was a virgin boy who didn't believe in sex before marriage and who had gentle fantasies of meeting the right girl and living happily ever after, but Doyle didn't know that so he allowed his own fantasies to run riot. He even called me a "little Oscar Wilde".

They wanted me to move to a different part of the police station. Throughout all of these proceedings I was completely uncooperative, neither answering questions nor moving without being forced. So they had to physically grab hold of me and force me to walk to a different room, feet dragging every step of the way. Remember that, at this stage of my life, I genuinely believed that the police were an organisation of evil, no different to the Roman centurions who killed Christ. I really believed that and I thought they were trying to do the same sort of thing, or a modern equivalent of it, to me. I thought that this was my temptation to see whether I would continue to follow Christ or be turned away from him by these evil officers.

I was taken to a different cell where a uniform police officer sat with a board and some papers on his lap. The scene looked odd. Something about the proceedings looked wrong. Why was he sitting in a cell instead of an office? Why were these proceedings so informal and fake looking? Doyle said "Right! Now shut up and listen!" He gestured to the uniform officer to proceed.

The uniform officer looked at his notes and read aloud, "These are the charges which you are not going to be charged with at this time, but which you may be charged with at a later date". He then read out a list of offences which sounded wrong, very wrong. For instance, the list included "engaging in homosexual practices with other men". Now, that had to be wrong. Homosexuality had been legalised in Britain several years before. This whole thing seemed to be fake, and the location of it, sitting in a cramped little cell instead of upstairs in an office, suggested that these officers were acting without the knowledge of their superiors. Next, I was, again forcibly, taken upstairs to the main office used by the detectives. I was informed that they were going to fingerprint me.

They then proceeded to ink up my hand and press it onto a fingerprint form, carefully pressing each fingertip and thumb onto the appropriate part of the form. Then they released me, laughed, clapped each other on the back and walked out of the office.

I couldn't believe it! They had left me alone in the detective office with the fingerprint sheet on the table in front of me. They hadn't even taken a copy!

I immediately set to work obliterating the fingerprints from the form. I pressed each of my, still inky, fingers onto the paper over the original prints. I imprinted the fingers upside-down and sideways over each other. I smeared, blurred, blotched and obscured every fingerprint, while being ultra careful not to touch any other object or leave any other fingermark. When I was sure that the fingerprints were completely obliterated I picked up the piece of rag they had left behind and began removing the remaining ink from my hands. After that I had a long wait until Doyle came back to the office and manhandled me downstairs again. On the way he said, sarcastically, "Your mother's here to collect you. We'll sign you out and then you can go and tell your mother all about it."

Sure enough, my mother was waiting downstairs with my younger sister Alex. There was a problem when the police wanted me to sign something before being released. As always, I refused to co-operate. They said I couldn't be released unless I signed and I said I would have to stay here forever, then. Eventually they gave in and got my mother to sign it instead. Then I was released, although they refused to return my book "Magick in Theory and Practice" by Aleister Crowley, which they said was in evidence, and the matter seemed closed until a few months later when I received a letter from Wallington Magistrates Court telling me to appear at a certain date and time and to seek Legal Aid.

In Britain there was, in those days, a system where an ordinary person can be defended by a solicitor who is paid from a fund set aside by the state for the purpose, the Legal Aid Fund. I went to a local firm of solicitors and applied for Legal Aid. The solicitor who was assigned to me told me more about the case.

He said that I was not actually being charged with any offence. Rather, he said, something very unusual was taking place. A reversal of the normal process of English Law. The solicitor told me that I was being commanded to appear in the magistrates court even though there were no charges against me and that when I appeared I would need to "give a good account of myself".

I was told that this "giving a good account of myself" was from an old law which was still on the statute book at that time, in 1972, but would probably soon be removed.

The solicitor told me that this particular law was so old that the wording of it on the statute book included the words "with or without hard labour" as a possible punishment if I failed to be found correct.

The best outcome would be that I would succeed in convincing the magistrate that I was "a person of good character".

I was further given to understand that, in this case, the usual style of English Law, in which a person is "innocent until proven guilty", would be reversed, and I was to be "guilty unless I succeeded in proving I was innocent". Therefore the onus was upon me to bear the burden of giving evidence. With these matters to chew over, I returned home and got on with my life.

When the court date arrived I turned up to meet the solicitor. I was accompanied by my mother and sister, who went into the public gallery. I wore a grey suit, black and white baseball boots and a grey polo neck jumper.

In those days I was often fond of wearing a tie with a suit but on this occasion decided not to, because the solicitor had told me to wear one. No-one was going to tell me what to wear. I took up my position in the dock, or witness box, or whatever the correct term is for that place where they make you stand. A court usher told me that I didn't have to swear on The Bible, I could instead choose to take an "affirmation". I felt insulted again!

Now, it seemed, they were telling me I was the sort of person who shouldn't want to swear on a bible!!!

I quietly but angrily informed the usher that I would happily swear on the bible. He seemed reluctant, but eventually permitted it. I had a very strong feeling that he had been bullied by the police to make him steer me away from the standard bible oath. Presumably in order to reinforce the image the police wanted to push of me as some sort of black magic deviant. I took the bible oath and I then began to answer the questions put to me, mostly by Doyle. Doyle clearly had no idea of how to speak in court. He openly abused me with personal insults, called me nasty names, generally committed slander in front of a courtroom full of witnesses. He asked really stupid sounding things such as "Is it not true that you are a bit weird?" or "Is it not true that you have pictures of men in your room?" and "Do you or don't you have magic powers?" and so on and so forth, getting wilder and more exaggerated in his accusations until the magistrate seemed as concerned as I was about Doyle's mental state. We were witnessing a policeman publicly having a breakdown and falling into a deluded state in which he believed that the feelings he had for long haired boys were somehow caused by the casting of real, actual magic spells. I was almost being tried for witchcraft, save only that magistrates were not quite so foolish as Doyle.

He asked me about the tie, which he believed was a police tie. I answered that the tie was inherited from my father. Doyle asked, "Is it not true that your father was P.C. Smith?" I replied that those were indeed my father's initials. Doyle went into a titch about my father being a policeman (which he wasn't) and I had to clear things up by repeating that 'P.C.' was only my father's initials, and not a rank. It got very silly for a while and Doyle became more and more hot under the collar. he asked about my long hair and asked why did I "want to look like a girl?" and why did I "want to trick men into looking at me?" Then he lost his composure completely and admitted in open court that he'd "got a hard on like a milk bottle" when he saw me walking along the road. Then he denied having just said that.

He began to argue with the other police officers who were sitting next to him in court. Then he tried to speak flirtingly with the elderly female magistrate, saying it was her he'd been referring to, not me at all. Then he changed tack and accused me of "making him say all these things "with my "magic powers". Finally the other police officers made him sit down. By now there could be no doubt in the magistrate's mind that Doyle was having a nervous breakdown. She wanted me to make an official complaint against him but I refused, saying that I wouldn't use a complaint procedure which was itself part of the corrupt system to which I was opposed. The magistrate was worried. She said, "If you don't make a complaint then

we can't do anything about it." I replied that shortcoming highlighted the problems with the system in general, all of which needed to be changed.

The magistrate made one last attempt at convincing me to make an official complaint and then wound up the proceedings, granting me a full discharge, having found that I was, indeed, "a person of good character".

I walked out of the court and was followed by man of about 30, wearing a zip-up jacket and casual trousers. He spoke in a feminine inflected voice and told me, "You ought to admit to what you are! Come out of the closet! You're one of us and you know it!" I told him to go away and stop being so ridiculous. I silently thought that he was a police-paid stooge and was their last ditch attempt. He continued following me down the corridor and even tried to grab my arm.

I reached the small table where the police had my "Magick in Theory and Practice" waiting for me to reclaim it. I did so. I also checked that the solicitor (who had been almost completely useless in the courtroom, leaving it all up to me) didn't need me for anything else. The officer sitting at the table asked if the man currently haranguing me with entreaties to "Come out" was bothering me.

I replied, "Well, You should know. He's obviously one of your undercover people!" Your people have obviously put him up to it" and I walked away with my book under my arm. Belatedly the police officer called after me that I had to sign for the book. I replied that it was MY book, which belonged to me and had been stolen from me by the police and that I now had it back. I said that did not have to sign anything in order to retain my own property since it had been taken from me under false pretences. I added that I had never signed anything in the first place when they stole my book and certainly would not sign something now that I had regained my own property.

Then I walked out of the building, re-joined my mother and sister, and we went to catch a bus home.

Normal life resumed. After a while I found a job packing boxes in a warehouse and saved up enough money to go travelling again. I acquired a bedroll and some bongo drums and headed for the town of Glastonbury in Somerset. Famous for the Earth Mysteries and the Arthurian stories, for both Christian and Pagan religious history.

My adventures were only beginning.